



WORKS IN PROGRESS

ESTABLISHED IN 1990 BY THE THURSTON COUNTY RAINBOW COALITION

Nothing says it's the holiday season like more laws to criminalize poverty

by Pat Tassoni

Attempting once again to sanitize downtown into a shop-only area, certain members of the Olympia City Council have recently proposed a number of ordinances targeting the poor in our community. These ordinances include a ban on car camping, no panhandling, no sitting on the sidewalk, and a no sale of fortified wine. The city has considered such items before. The city claims it is responding to complaints from "Business," as presented by the Olympia Downtown Association (ODA) and the Olympia Police, but as usual are unable to present any real statistical data demonstrating that things are getting worse or who is doing what. Meanwhile the police chief has admitted in a committee meeting that it is the bar patrons that urinate downtown, not the homeless.

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The council previously held public forums on these same issues. The overwhelming community response has always reflected an understanding and agreement that there are already enough laws regulating public behavior such as panhandling and blocking the sidewalks, etc. Expanding police powers to criminalize legal behavior will not be tolerated in Olympia as a means to criminalize poverty and harass the homeless. This community instead wants the council to address some of the underlying problems, such as not having enough shelter to meet the needs of the homeless. The city should fund shelter, as well as transitional and affordable housing, so people don't have to sleep in their cars or outside. It costs over twice as much taxpayer money to keep someone incarcerated than to pay for them to be housed with services.

An organized response to show that the Olympia community does not support these draconian ordinances was held

with a "sit-in" on the downtown sidewalks before Artswalk in October. It broadly defined downtown as consisting of users, recreationists, tenants and shoppers to counter the perception that downtown is only a shopping district.

Safe and viable downtown

One of the reasons repeatedly touted for these ordinances is to clean up downtown and make it safe to draw in more shoppers. Is it just a coincidence that this is happening again during the holiday shopping season? Downtown *is* safe. In fact, between the last round of proposed ordinances and today, Olympia was ranked the third

safest city in the nation—it doesn't get any safer than here. Also downtown has exactly the number of vacant

businesses that experts say is needed to keep the marketplace in check. Over and over again, the specter of "public safety" has been raised by the ODA crowd to pass new laws. But they shoot themselves in the foot by constantly bringing up how dangerous downtown is in the hopes to project how safe it is there. And this has been going on for the past 20 years.

Not everyone's needs can be met within the confines of downtown—people will live elsewhere, work elsewhere, recreate elsewhere, shop elsewhere, and hang out elsewhere. The city could go much further in developing downtown with regulations targeted not at folks who already value downtown but aimed instead at eliminating sprawl and capping the size of outlying retail stores. The downtown business association should lead such a move, but they won't even speak out against their biggest threat: Wal-Mart. Instead the business association is willing to bite the hands that

feed them, hoping that more or bigger hands are just waiting in the wings.

Then there is the whole debate on what public space is. It is indeed a sad commentary on our society if public space is only seen as a commercial venue, and laws continue to be proposed and implemented to weed out the non-consumers (or in this case, the not-spendy-enough-consumers). The reality is that these laws, while targeting an "expendable" class, actually insult and infuriate many of the regulars who do spend time and money downtown. With new laws like these, the difference between the downtown and the mall get ever smaller...

Perception and discrimination

People of different classes dress and behave differently just as people from different cultures do. Those differences should not be the basis for assumptions about those people or be a reason to feel unsafe. White Americans used to be afraid (and some still are) of blacks, natives, Japanese, and gays and lesbians. Those attitudes are the problems of the perceiver and should not be made the responsibility of the target.

Unfortunately poverty is not a protected status, and so discrimination based on it is permitted. What is right is not always a matter of law. What is legal is a not always right. Our recent past shows how the faces, abilities and manners of diversity have changed (as they will continue to change to finally include everyone). Not too long ago women neither had the right to vote nor could buy a car; racial segregation was tolerated and enforced by laws against people of color; and homosexuality was seen as a disease. Imagining laws against these classes today is as outrageous and backwards as our children will see the proposed Olympia ordinances against poverty and the homeless now taking form.

► **Poverty** continued on page 8



Demonstrators "sit-in" to show solidarity with those who have fewer seating options, September 30. (photo by Pat Tassoni)

Works In Progress needs new central coordinator!

After sixteen years of steady publication, *Works In Progress* has as much if not more energy and momentum than ever. And once again, one or more people are needed to step into the role of coordinating its content and production each month. The role is demanding and time consuming, and thus it is not something one can do indefinitely. But it's been scientifically proven to be a profoundly gratifying experience for anyone who values the project and the community it serves.

And you couldn't hope to work with a better group of people.

The training and transition phase will begin in November and will need to be completed by the end of January. Interested parties should know that the coordination role is much like a part-time salaried job...without the salary, but the rewards are priceless.

This really is an exciting opportunity for people with a passion for local grassroots media. If you are interested in joining the all-volunteer *WIP* worker collective, in a central coordination role, or in some other capacity, please join us in an open meeting:

**Monday, November 6, at 7:00 pm
at the Olympia Center, Room 101**

We've got the momentum...let's keep it rolling!

For more information write to wip@zhonka.net.

Visit the WIP website at www.olywip.org

Olympia 22 win initial court battle

First Iraq War protest case to be allowed to argue "defense of necessity"

In a historic ruling in the Thurston County District Court on Oct. 3, presiding judge Susan Dubuison has allowed the necessity defense to be used in a case resulting from civil resistance against the Iraq war.

This is only the fourth time in Washington State that the necessity defense has been allowed in trial for a case of civil resistance, and possibly the first time in the United States to be allowed in the case of activists demonstrating against the Iraq War.

The 17 defendants in this case were charged under the criminal trespass statute after participating in acts of civil resistance at the Port of Olympia on May 30, 2006, in response to the deployment of Army Stryker vehicles to Iraq for the continued US occupation of Iraq. 22 activists were arrested that day, leading to the activists being identified as the "Olympia 22."

Despite initial accusations in the mainstream press that protesters engaged in vandalism and property destruction, no one has been charged with property destruction. Initial reports of the arrestees

in *The Olympian* contained serious errors concerning the arrest charges and actions at the pretrial hearings.

The necessity defense, recognized only under limited circumstances, is applied to justify alleged actions conducted to stop a greater wrong—in this case, the defendants' belief that the Iraq War is illegal and immoral.

According to one of the attorneys in the case, Larry Hildes, "The jury will get to hear from defendants why their actions were necessary and render a verdict based on that evidence. Defendants also get to demonstrate why they had no alternative but to take action to stop the [military] shipments."

The ruling followed numerous pretrial hearings, which began on June 6 and have already dealt with issues of police destruction of video documentation and the obstruction of the gathering of evidence [see page 5 for more details].

On May 22, Stryker vehicles from the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Division of Fort Lewis began arriving at the Port of Olympia for ship-

ment to Iraq, which resulted in ten days of protest and 37 arrests, when local residents blocked a Stryker convoy and held demonstrations at the Port. Police responded with pepper spray, Tasers, and batons against the nonviolent anti-war activists.

The 3rd Brigade, 2nd Division was deployed to Iraq for a second tour in late June. Since then, the Brigade has suffered at least 6 fatalities and over 20 wounded. On June 22, Lt. Ehren Watada of the 3rd Stryker Brigade became the first commissioned officer to publicly refuse deployment to Iraq, also on the grounds that the Iraq War is illegal.

The trial date for the 17 defendants has been set for Nov. 13 at the Thurston County Courthouse, with a final pretrial hearing on Nov. 6. The public is invited.

The last time that the necessity defense was allowed in Thurston County District Court occurred in 1987, when activists were arrested while demonstrating against US support of South African Apartheid.

For more information, visit the Olympia 22 website at www.olympia22.org

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Works In Progress is a free, volunteer-operated progressive community newspaper based in Olympia, Washington. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of *Works In Progress* and are solely those of the authors.

Submissions

Please send text as Word attachments. Artwork and photos can be sent electronically or we can scan them for you as camera-ready/black & white.

WIP reserves the right to publish in whole or part all submissions. For editing purposes, please enclose your phone number.

Articles may be reprinted. Please cite source.

If you don't see your issue being covered in Works In Progress, it's because you aren't writing about it! (Or aren't finding someone else to cover it!)

Send submissions to wip@zhonka.net or mail to Works In Progress, PO Box 295, Olympia, WA 98507-0295.

Governing Tool

The following statement is part of the Editorial Policy and is the governing tool for the Anti-Discrimination Clause:

WIP will make every effort to work with the contributor of material considered by WIP to be offensive in order to reach a mutually agreed upon resolution, but WIP reserves the right as a last resort to edit or not print submitted material.

Mission Statement

"Our aim is to confront injustice and encourage a participatory democracy

WORKERS IN PROGRESS

Chris Allert	Sandy Mayes
Dave Campbell	Phan Nguyen
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based on economic, social, and environmental justice. *Works In Progress* is dedicated to providing a voice for those most affected by the exclusionary and unfair practices that seek to silence the oppressed."

Anti-Discrimination Clause

We will collectively endeavor to be sensitive and respectful to all those oppressed in this society, and their issues. However, if and when we should make a mistake in this regard, we expect to acknowledge it and to express regret for injury or insult given.

Back Issues

Get your catalog of indexed *WIP*'s below. Some back issues are available in the Timberland Library system. *WIP* is being archived on microfilm by the UW Library.

On the cover: 16 of the Olympia 22 celebrate outside of the Thurston County Courthouse after winning the right to argue "defense of necessity" for their upcoming trial. (photo by Pat Tassoni) **See stories on page 1 and 5.**

WIP Schedule

Submission Deadline:
Nov. 24

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wip@zhonka.net • www.olywip.org/wip

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Iraq for sale: The War Profiteers

Sunday, November 5, 6:00 pm

Traditions Café and World Folk Art, 300 5th Avenue SW

This film showing is sponsored by the Alliance for Democracy, South Puget Sound Chapter. The Alliance for Democracy is dedicated to restoring democratic authority over government and corporations, reviving grassroots democracy, and establishing appropriate limits on corporate influence.

To find out more, visit www.sounddemocracy.org or contact Jacqui at 360-236-9684 or jacquiAFD@comcast.net.

Free admission: \$5-\$10 donation appreciated.

WROC Night Out: Voting discussion roundtable

Monday, November 6

First United Methodist Church, 1224 Legion Way SE

Potluck at 5:30, Discussion 6-8 pm

Share what you know about the candidates and initiatives. Learn what others know. Bring your voter pamphlets and/or ballots. If you are not registered to vote, come and get registered so you can vote next election. On-site childcare and travel reimbursement available.

Monday morning, November 6, we will be at the Shelton welfare office!

WROC Projects: Volunteer!

Volunteer meetings every Wednesday afternoon at 1:30 at the Olympia WROC office in the Payne Room of the First Christian Church, 701 Franklin St SE, Olympia, WA 98501

Outreach!

Thursday mornings in November at the Olympia welfare office, 6860 Capitol. Be available to those who might want a witness and to let people know more about their rights.

Call to Artists!

ArtWROC, a celebration and sale of local arts and crafts and annual WROC fundraiser is coming up on December 9 and 10 at Bryce's Barbershop on 4th Avenue. We are looking for donations! Artists can keep up to 50% of the proceeds.

Monica Peabody

Welfare Rights Organizing Coalition

701 Franklin Street SE, Olympia, WA 98501

(360) 352-9716, toll free (866) 343-9716

www.wroc.org

Dorothy Granada, US nurse and human rights worker in Nicaragua

Wednesday, November 15, 7:00 pm

Temple Beth Hatfiloh, 201 8th Ave. SE

Dorothy Granada, an internationally acclaimed health promoter and human rights activist, will visit Olympia on about her work with the rural poor in Nicaragua. She will speak of the work of the **Maria Luisa Ortiz Women's Health Clinic** in Mulukuku, Nicaragua, a project committed to The Empowerment of Women Through Health and the effects of neoliberal economics on the health of the poor. The Women's Health Clinic developed in response to the needs of women for integrated health care, originally organized by war-displaced women in 1989. The Clinic, started in 1990, focuses on reproductive health, prenatal care, children's health and early detection and treatment of cervical-uterine cancer. Over the years, the work of the Clinic and Cooperative has grown to respond to factors that impact the health of women: literacy, housing, income, awareness of gender, civic, legal and human rights, and defense against violence. This event provides an opportunity to share the experiences of and contribute financial support to a group of women who are providing the only health care in one of the poorest areas of Nicaragua.

The Maria Luisa Ortiz Cooperative and Clinic are supported by the Women's Empowerment Network, PO Box 7652, Olympia, WA 98507. The Women's Empowerment Network is a 501C3 tax deductible organization.

KOWA at the crossroads

KOWA, 106.5 FM in Olympia, strongly invites your participation! Staff transitioning has resulted in a dire need for increased community involvement at this time. We are especially in need of politically-aware individuals to help with the selection and playing of each day's content, especially if Democracy Now! is to continuing being broadcast at 8 AM each weekday. If you have been thinking about getting involved, now is the time to do so. You can come to our Monday meetings at 6 pm at 816 Adams, downtown Olympia, email kowa@riseup.net, and/or try calling us mornings at 352-1646. Local programming is strongly invited, be it talk, music, or some combination thereof. Now is the time to strengthen and sustain this valuable community resource!

Keep Democracy Now! on TCTV

October 27, in Lacey a packed house listened to Amy Goodman of Democracy NOW! (DN!), and supported local non-corporate media, Thurston Community TV (TCTV, channel 22) and KAOS community radio (89.3 FM), as they collaboratively sponsored the event. Media Island International (MII) of Olympia is the 501 (c) (3) sponsor of DN!s airing on TCTV. In accordance with part of MII's mission, this sponsorship helps expand the reach of DN!'s "War and Peace Report" in Thurston County, making it available to more of us. 2007 is Media Island's fifth year as this sponsor. We fund the DISH Network subscription that provides TCTV with the satellite feed of DN! MII needs financial donations to cover that subscription cost, and the TCTV membership (required) fee. With last year's donation balance, we need only \$135 .

To be part of this collaborative community effort please write tax deductible checks out to Media Island, write "DN!" on subject line, and mail to: Sandia c/o MII, PO Box 7204, Olympia 98507.

A Women's Community Building Weekend

At Fertile Ground Guest House, 311 9th Ave SE

Friday, Dec. 1, 6 pm-9 pm, introduction and circle work

Saturday, Dec. 2, 9 am-6 pm, circle work with breaks

Sunday, Dec. 3, 9 am-5 pm, circle work and wrap-up

This is an invitation to explore building community through communicating with authenticity; welcoming and affirming diversity; addressing difficult issues; bridging differences with integrity; and relating with love and respect.

A donation of \$150-200 is suggested. Please do not let money stand in your way if you wish to attend. If able, please consider an extra amount as a 'scholarship fund' for others. Pre-registration and a \$50 deposit is due by November 26. There will be an information session at Fertile Ground November 11 from 4-5 pm and again on November 14 from 6-7 pm, offering an opportunity to meet one of the facilitators, ask questions and hear more about Community Building. Childcare may be provided for this event. Please let us know what your needs are.

For more information, contact Catherine Hylen at 360-888-2783 or catherine.hylen@gmail.com

Olympia 22 goes to court...again ...and again!

The Olympia 22, activists who were arrested while demonstrating against war machines shipping from the Port of Olympia, will be making two appearances at the Thurston County Courthouse:

Monday, Nov. 6, 9:00 am: final pretrial hearing, in which the judge will rule on two motions for dismissal—one involving a **destroyed police videotape** and another involving preferential treatment by the Port for pro-war demonstrators.

Monday, Nov. 13, 9:00 am: Trial begins for the Olympia 22.

The public is invited to attend. **Wear red to show solidarity!** Thurston County Courthouse, 2000 Lakeridge Dr. SW, Olympia. **(See front page and page 5 for related articles.)**

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www.olywa.net/speech

NOVEMBER 2006

IS THE 2006 ELECTION FIXED?

BELOW IS A LIST OF ALL IFFY CONGRESSIONAL RACES TO WATCH. WILL THE GOP RETAIN CONTROL?

	DEMOCRAT LEANING	TOSS-UP RACES	REPUBLICAN LEANING
HOUSE	GIFFORDS (AZ) GRAF PERLMUTTER (CO) O'DONNELL MAHONEY (FL) NEGRON (FOLEY) BARROW * (GA) BURNS MARSHALL * (GA) COLLINS BRALEY (IA) WHALEN BOSWELL * (IA) LAMBERTI GRANT (ID) SALI BEAN * (IL) MCSWEENEY DONNELLY (IN) CHOCOLA * ELLSWORTH (IN) HOSTETTTLER * DAVIS (NY) REYNOLDS * SPACE (OH) PADGETT MURPHY (PA) GERLACH * SESTAK (PA) WELDON * CARNEY (PA) SHERWOOD * LAMPSON (TX) SEKULA-GIBBS WELCH (VT) RAINVILLE	COURTNEY (CT) SIMMONS * FARRELL (CT) SHAYS * JENNINGS (FL) BUCHANAN KLEIN (FL) SHAW * DUCKWORTH (IL) ROSKAM HILL (IN) SODREL * LUCAS (KY) DAVIS * WETTERLING (MN) BACHMANN MADRID (NM) WILSON * SHULER (NC) TAYLOR * ARCURI (NY) MEIER KILROY (OH) PRYCE * KELLAM (VA) DRAKE * BURNER (WA) REICHERT* KAGEN (WI) GARD * INCUMBENTS DEMOCRATS () REPUBLICANS	SIMON (AZ) RENZI * MITCHELL (AZ) HAYWORTH * MCNERNEY (CA) POMBO * PACCIONE (CO) MUSGRAVE * MURPHY (CT) JOHNSON * YARMUTH (KY) NORTHUP * WALZ (MN) GUTKNECHT * DERBY (NV) HELLER HAFEN (NV) PORTER * STENDER (NJ) FERGUSON * GILLIBRAND (NY) SWEENEY * MASSA (NY) KUHL * CRANLEY (OH) CHABOT * WULSIN (OH) SCHMIDT * MURPHY (PA) FITZPATRICK * RODRIGUEZ (TX) BONILLA * TRAUNER (WY) CUBIN *
	CARDIN (MD) STEELE TESTER (MT) BURNS * BROWN (OH) DEWINE * CASEY (PA) SANTORUM * CANTWELL * (WA) MCGAVICK	MCCASKILL (MO) TALENT * MENENDEZ * (NJ) KEAN WHITEHOUSE (RI) CHAFEE * FORD (TN) CORKER	WEBB (VA) ALLEN *
SENATE	SOURCES: LARRY J. SABATO AND THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA CENTER FOR POLITICS		

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
WITH LESSTHANTWOWEEKSTOGOBEFORETHEMIDTERM ELECTIONS, DEMOCRATS CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN A DOUBLE-DIGIT ADVANTAGE NATIONALLY AND LEAD BY THE SAME MARGIN IN THE COMPETITIVE DISTRICTS THAT WILL DETERMINE WHICH PARTY CONTROLS THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. PEW RESEARCH CENTER						
1	2	3	4			
1890: Mississippi adopts new constitution that restricts black suffrage to those who can read and interpret the US Constitution	1648: 12,000 Jews massacred in present day Ukraine 1963: US backed military coup deposes Diem regime	1394: Charles VI of France expels Jews 1885: Tacomavigilantes drive out Chinese, burn their homes and businesses	1879: Cash register is patented, created to combat stealing by bartenders 1986: Democrats gain control of US Senate			
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1872: Susan B. Anthony is fined \$100 for trying to vote. She never pays it. 1956: Britain/France land forces in Egypt	1913: Gandhi arrested forleadingIndianminers march in S Africa 1978: Shah of Iran places Iran under military rule	1837: Mob murders abolitionist Elijah Lovejoy in IL 1967: LBJ signs bill creating Corporation for Public Broadcasting	1519: Cortez enters Tenochtitlan, theAztec capital 1910: First Washington State election in which women could vote	1862: US Grant issues orders to bar Jews from serving under him 2002: One million march in Italy to protest globalization	1917: 41 suffragists are arrested in front of the White House 1951: Firstlongdistance telephone call without operator assistance	1972: US Army turns over Long Bihn base to S Vietnamese army 1998: WA, tribes reach agreement to permit electronic gambling
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1933: Nazis receive 92% of German vote 1938: Hermann Goering announces he wants Madagascar as a Jewish homeland	1942: Minimum draft age lowered from 21 to 18 1974: Karen Silkwood dies under suspicious circumstances	1995: U.N. releases 1st comprehensive report on world biodiversity: 10,000 animal and plant species are threatened with extinction	1969: 250,000 demonstrate in WA DC against Vietnam War 1969: Janis Joplin, accused of indecent language in Tampa, FL	1894: 6,000 Armenians massacred by Turks in Kurdistan 1933: Roosevelt establishes diplomatic relations with USSR	1278: England:680Jews arrested(293hanged)for counterfeiting coins 1948: House of Commons nationalizes British steel industry	1964: J Edgar Hoover describes MLK as “most notorious liar” 1909: US invades Nicaragua, overthrows President Zelaya
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
2003: InLondon Bush defends invasion/ occupation of Iraq, US “will use force when necessary” against despotic regimes	1959: UN adopts the declaration of children’s rights 1962: President John F. Kennedy lifts the Blockade of Cuba	1654: RichardJohnson, a freeblack, granted550 acres in Virginia 1973: 18 minute gap is found in the Watergate tapes	1943: FDR, Churchill and Chiang Kai-shek meet to discuss ways to defeat Japan 2002: WA: 1 in 10 have no health insurance	1939: Wearing Jewish star becomes obligatory for all Jews in Poland 1971: China People’s Republic seated in UN Security Council	1859: Darwinpublishes On Origin of Species 1947: Un-American Activities Committee finds “Hollywood 10” in contempt	1766: Pope Clement XIII warns of the dangers of anti-Christian writings 1841: 35 Amistad survivors go to Africa
26	27	28	29	30	PRESIDENT BUSH’S APPROVAL RATE: -- 38 PERCENT -- ONLY 16% OF VOTERS APPROVE OF THE JOB CONGRESS IS DOING	
1973: Nixon’spersonal sec, RoseMary Woods, tells a federal court she accidentally caused part of 18-minute gap in a key Watergate tape	1998: State Theater is reopened by Harlequin Productions 2003: Janet McCloud, prominent in the local 1960s fish wars, dies	1964:Johnson’sNational Security Council recommends adoption of two-stage escalation of the bombing of North Vietnam.	1916: United States declares martial law in Dominican Republic 1963: Warren Comm. establishedtoinvestigate the JFK assassination	1907: The Pike Place Market is dedicated in Seattle 1961: USSR vetoes Kuwait’s application for UN membership	NBC/WALL ST JOURNAL	

Dixon arrest keeps public safe from democracy

by Leela Yelleseetty and Nick Hart

Aaron Dixon, the Green Party candidate for US Senate, was arrested on October 17 for protesting his exclusion from a candidates' debate. The debate included Democratic incumbent Maria Cantwell, Republican Mike McGavick, and Libertarian candidate Bruce Guthrie. Candidates were included based on a complicated set of rules, which makes it exceedingly difficult for third parties to participate. Guthrie got in because he donated \$1.2 million of his own money to his campaign—and despite the fact that Dixon polls three times higher and has raised more money from outside sources. To his credit, Guthrie stated in the debate that Dixon should have been included.

More than 50 supporters gathered to protest during the taping of the debate. Dixon, in an act of civil disobedience, entered the studio, bolstered by chants of “US out of Iraq, Aaron in the debate,” in reference to the fact that the two major party candidates are pro-war. Dixon was promptly escorted out by police, put in handcuffs, and driven off in a police car. After continuing their protest outside the station, the crowd made its way towards the police station where they were greeted by Dixon, who had been released. “I did this today because I thought it was important to make a statement about this country’s corrupt political process,” he said to the cheering crowd. “This has got to change. And the only way for this to happen is if we organize poor people and working people and demand a change!”

A few days later, nearly 200 gathered for the final stop on Dixon’s statewide tour, “Out of War and Into Our Communities.” People from all walks of life gathered to hear from community leaders and spoken word and hip-hop artists—all united against the war and the twisted spending priorities of the two-party system. Dixon took the stage to thunderous applause and explained to supporters why he is running for Senate. He condemned both the Democrats and Republicans for the war in Iraq, the estimated 655,000 lives it has claimed so far, and the \$300+ billion wasted—funds desperately needed in our communities for education, jobs and health care. He also linked his campaign to the growing struggles for social change that are sweeping Latin America.

One of the most powerful speeches came from Chanan Suarez, a decorated anti-war Iraq veteran. “The war on Iraq that Bush led has destroyed the lives of many thousands in Iraq,” said Suarez. “But I also met many people, including a three-year old with leukemia, who suffered from lack of proper medical care that began under the Clinton sanctions. The domination of Iraq has always been a bipartisan effort.”

From the *Socialist Worker*, www.socialist-worker.org.

“Flag 3” arrests made sure the World Could Wait

When they came for the anarchists, *The Stranger* asked, “What’s anarchy?”

by Jake Erwin

In the Oct. 12 issue of The Stranger, Sarah Mirk reported on the arrest of three (or “two”) Olympians at a World Can’t Wait rally in Seattle. The arrests occurred after a police officer stole an anarcho-syndicalist flag under the pretense of maintaining peace and order. Mirk, described by The Stranger as being “paid to cover the news stories no one else wants to write,” lived up to the description by relying solely on the police report prepared by the officer who instigated the incident for her article. Aside from getting the facts wrong and playing off stereotypes about anarchy, Mirk missed the larger ramifications of the arrests—namely, the impunity with which authorities shut down political expression. One of the arrestees, Jake Erwin, speaks out.

The Stranger has now officially entered the ranks of botched, mainstream, right-wing, jingo-journalism. The short treatment of the “Flag 3,” the three “anarchists” arrested on Oct. 5 before the World Can’t Wait rally, has placed *The Stranger* just above the *New York Post*, somewhere in between *USA Today* and the *Washington Post*.

Writer Sarah Mirk utilized the quasi-fabricated police report of Matthew Hyra, the instigating and arresting officer, as her only source for her quarter-page report on the incident. This blind faith in a faulty police report demonstrates not only the worst of journalistic laziness but also destroys any semblance of objectivity, what was once supposed to be the basis of the journalistic ethos. From the *New York Times*, or any other major paper, this is to be expected. But from *The Stranger*? Apparently the thin veil of counterculture credibility separating *The Stranger* from other US journalistic efforts has not allowed it to foster a truer sense of journalism, fair treatment of stories, or objectivity (or at least non-mainstream subjectivity).

Don’t get me wrong; I’ve never turned to *The Stranger* for in-depth political analysis of the protests in Oaxaca. But I did at least expect that right-wing journalism would be largely absent from its pages. I guess peer pressure from the *Village Voice* has shifted *The Stranger* to the right, resulting in the condescending report of the arrest of “two” (three, actually) anarchists, portrayed entirely through the words of the arresting officer, Hyra.

This disappointment does not come as a surprise, but what is somewhat surprising is that a publication oriented (at least superficially) for and about the counter-culture could completely overlook the dire

implications of this incident. Even Hyra’s police report reveals that he equated the anarcho-syndicalist flag with “a symbol of violence,” and therefore decided to snatch it from the group that was gathering prior to the rally.

The implications of his actions go well beyond Cal Anderson Park and encompass much more than anarchy, for Hyra’s actions were meant to demonstrate the criminality of anarchy: expressions of anarchy, symbols of anarchy, anarchy in whole. Anarchist actions can obviously include crimes: hell, you can’t overthrow a state without breaking its laws. But the tradition of anarchy includes much more than crimes. From Kropotkin’s scientific analysis of human nature, to the precedent-setting Paris commune, to Emma Goldman’s wide-ranging social commentary, the legacy of anarchy is rich with critical insight into humanity and historical moments of creativity. Those who reduce anarchy to an ideology of violence would be surprised to find that as an ideology it constitutes the search for human freedom and liberty (two words we as North Americans hold dear) and a belief that humanity can reach a level of equality

The crime in question was not committed by a flag, or a flag-bearer: it was committed by a cop with a personal dislike for an ideology, and whose badge provided the authority to violate our rights and silence our expression.

and peace that extinguishes the need for hierarchy, coercion, and authority. They may also be confused to find traces of anarchy emanating from the founding fathers of the US in the sentiments conveyed by Thomas Jefferson when he laid forth the idea that a revolution should occur every decade to prevent static governance and the development of institutionalized tyranny.

Because anarchy, as an ideology, undermines and delegitimizes the very fact of power, it presents the purest threat against those in power. Thus it has been so thoroughly sidelined and demonized by mainstream culture that the word anarchy has become synonymous with the vilest image of chaos; a hellish situation in which the most extremely violent pathologies arise in every person and randomness and death collide to conjure up the end of civilization and everything sacred. It has long been the struggle of any revolutionary ideology to combat the mainstream stereotypes and characterizations of it, and this struggle continues with anarchy. But the incident



Jake Erwin was arrested after failing to understand that the anarcho-syndicalist flag was “a symbol of violence.” Yet only the Seattle police were inspired by the flag to commit violence.

of the arrest of the “Flag 3” demonstrates that the struggle has once again been elevated to another level beyond the cultural or ideological: the legal level. Anarchy has been criminalized in whole. Its action, its expression, its advertisement, its thought, its entirety has been criminalized. In the *Stranger* article, as in the police report, Hyra stated that “one of the suspects admitted to being an anarchist.” Why is being an anarchist so wrong that one has to “admit” to being one? Will they soon outlaw the internet, as it has been identified by Hyra as “a common medium used by anarchists to communicate?”

Clearly, the criminalization of a thought violates the letter and spirit of the First Amendment of the Constitution. It is no surprise these days to hear examples of human and civil rights violations by every faction of the US government. And it is not the first time in US history anarchists have been persecuted by the government for their beliefs. But this in no way decreases the significance of this incident. In criminalizing a thought, the Seattle Police Dept. has continued the infringement on our right to dissent. The First Amendment protects free speech, but more significantly protects anyone from persecution, by the state or others, due to their thoughts, no matter how counter-social or un-mainstream. When this right is overturned by the police or any other governmental agency, it threatens everyone who has ever disagreed with a government official in even the most minute of ways.

This is obvious. Yet an editor of a “counterculture” newspaper blindly regurgitates the official lies, further denigrating the wrongly accused, extending and legitimizing the violation of the right to dissent, and allowing the crime to go unrecognized for what it really is. The crime in question was not committed by a flag, or a flag-bearer: it was committed by a cop with a personal dislike for an ideology, and whose badge provided the authority to violate our rights and silence our expression. This crime threatens not only anarchists, but anyone with an alternative vision to that of the mainstream or the government, including small counterculture newspapers.

To criminalize dissent, no matter what specific ideological framework within which it exists, threatens us all, and hinders the very human capacity for social evolution. In these days of right-wing jingoism and ferocious red, white, and blue flag-waving, alternative visions hold a very special place in combating the status quo of torture, war, inequality, exploitation, and oppression. All of us who question and challenge this state of humanity must express solidarity in a common fight against it, and it is sad to see *The Stranger* denounce this struggle.



Left: Aaron Dixon, backed by a crowd of supporters, demanded to be allowed into the King 5 studios to make the Senatorial debate a real debate. (photo by Wendy Call)

HOW INCARCERATION IS CAUSING CRIME

by Marco Rosaire Rossi

For almost a decade, the crime rate in the United States has been steadily declining. The reasons for this decline are varied, but most criminologists have pointed to the continuous increase in prisons and jail populations as the primary cause. The rationale is that we have less crime because we have fewer criminals on the street. However, something important happened in the last two years that has forced many criminologists to question this theory: in almost all major cities in the country, crime rates—especially violent crime rates—have gone up despite the fact that prison and jail populations continue to expand. According to a preliminary FBI report released in June of this year, non-negligent manslaughter increased 4.8% nationwide, the largest jump in 15 years. Murders from last year were up 38% in Cleveland, 42% in Kansas City, 44 % in Charlotte/Mecklenburg County, and an unbelievable 76% in Birmingham. In July, the Senate Appropriations Committee declared that the US is seeing “the largest increase in violent crime... since 1991.” These facts negate the “fewer criminals equals less crime” hypothesis, and may show that the continuous expansion of prisons and jails, and the continuous cutting of social services and rehabilitation programs, is causing crime.

William Baker knows crime, and he knows the criminal justice system. Baker, a 47-year-old black man living in Pennsylvania, has been involved in criminal activity ever since he was a kid. Growing up in the ghetto, he started selling marijuana to make money for his parents. He left school in sixth grade and started dealing heroin and cocaine. He became an addict, and easily kept his habit alive during his three terms in prisons—which included

a 15-year sentence for armed robbery. Now, having been out of prison for almost two years, he is working a \$10/hour job and wants to turn his

life around. “I don’t want to be a criminal at 50,” he told the *New York Times*. However, it is not easy. He led a *Times* reporter down the Pennsylvania Ave. strip, pointing out the various difficulties and obstacles that exist for black men: addicts, hustlers, fortress-like liquor stores, aimless loiterers with no jobs, and crushing poverty. “I don’t understand,” Baker tells the reporter. “If a man wants to change, why won’t society give him a chance to prove he’s a changed person?”

Criminologists are starting to put experiences like William Baker’s into perspective, concluding that the system may cause more problems than it fixes. A report released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics revealed that the more often people are arrested, the more often they commit crime. According to the report, prisoners who have one prior offense have a 40.6% recidivism rate within the first 3 years on release. From there, the chance of recidivism dramatically increases with every additional arrest, topping off at fifteen with an 82.1% chance. In addition, the problem of committing a serious crime once released from prison seems to be getting worse over time. In 1983, a first-time offender had a 5% chance of committing a serious crime within the first 3 years of being released from prison. By 1994, that figure had jumped to 67%.

There are several reasons why this occurs, but two stand out. The first and easiest one to quantify is the economy. The lost of factory jobs in the United States throughout the 1980s seriously affected unskilled laborers from all demographics. The increase in job competition makes it difficult for prisoners, who have the stigma of their convictions working against them, to find jobs with sustainable wages. The situation is particularly troubling for African-Americans, who experience a tremendous amount of racism that helps them get into prison and keeps them from getting out. Bruce Western, a sociologist at Princeton University, has compiled data showing that in 2004, 72% of black men in their 20s who dropped out of high school and 50% of those who lacked a college education were jobless. The trouble with finding jobs in the legal economy eventually attracts participants for the illegal economy, thus increasing the likelihood that people will find themselves back in prison. There is an ongoing cycle, at least for African-American communities, where high jobless rates leads to high incarceration rates, which leads to high jobless rates. The cycle between poverty and incarceration is also backed by examining recidivism rates for particular crimes. Offenders who commit crimes involving money are more likely to return to prison (around a 70% chance) than those who commit rape or murder (around a 40% chance.)

The other major factor is the breakdown of community—particular family bonds. In March of 2000, Jeffrey Fagan and Tracey L. Meares of Columbia Law School published a paper showing how incarceration disrupts important social bonds which are the principle factor in developing healthy relationships. Joseph T. Jones, the director for The Center for Fathers, Families, and Workforce

Development, agrees. Not just the economy, but also terrible education, absent parents, a lack of good role models and leadership—all perpetuated when a parent is incarcerated—has a major influence in increasing crime rates. “Many of these men grew up fatherless, and they never had good role models,” Jones said about the men who visit his center. “No one around them knows how to navigate the mainstream society.” The added stigma and shame that prisoners feel when trying to reintegrate back into society worsens the situation. Again, there is a vicious cycle with a breakdown of important social bonds leading to incarceration which leads to a greater breakdown of social bonds.

All this information leads to a very simple idea, but still is very difficult for most policymakers and criminologists to grasp: criminals aren’t born, they’re made. The simplistic notion of “fewer criminals equals less crime” ignores the reflective and dynamic relationship that the criminal justice system has with various communities, and how those communities struggle with other sociological factors. The idea that we can simply “lock up” our problems through tougher punishments and longer sentences obviously isn’t working, and is making the problem much worse. In this way, bad policies are the real culprit behind the rising crime rate, with mass incarceration still being one of the worst.

Port protest video mysteriously disappears

Second Olympia amnesia case, as OPD detective can’t remember anything

by Drew Hendricks

The case against antiwar protesters arrested at the Port of Olympia just might get thrown out of court.

Paul Lower, an Olympia Police Detective, was at the main gate of the Port’s marine terminal in downtown Olympia on May 30. Several dozen protesters gathered there on that day to oppose the use of our property to support the occupation of Iraq. Detective Lower was shooting videotape during the arrests of several protesters, according to eyewitnesses, photographs, and court documents. He then destroyed the videotape he shot, on or about July 30, according to his account. Unfortunately he did not make this videotape available to Olympia Copwatch, which requested the material prior to its destruction. The legal requirement is that the department keep any videotape of a specific case until at

least 30 days after the disposition of criminal court cases involving that evidence. The city of Olympia follows the State’s mandated rules specifying this time requirement, according to a letter I received from the Olympia Police Department on October 27, 2006.

When one of the protesters facing charges, “Oly 22” defendant Andrew Yankey, found out about the destruction of potentially exculpatory videotape evidence on August 22, he scheduled an interview with Detective Lower for August 28. OPD Detective Lower informed the Deputy Prosecutor of this, and she unilaterally rescheduled the interview for August 30, and notified the inexperienced defendant of the change by voice mail.

There was no reason why the prosecutor, who does not represent the OPD, should have decided when and where the deposition may be held. But that is exactly what happened in this case. Thurston County Deputy Prosecutor Debra Eurich injected herself into the deposition of OPD Detective Paul Lower and made misrepresentations to the judge in the case, convincing the judge to hold the deposition in District Court instead of a private attorney’s office. But to get there, she first took us on a bizarre ride.

Several people arrived on August 30 at the satellite office of the Prosecutor, a small office on Lakeridge Drive, apart from the main courthouse complex. This was the rescheduled day, and venue, where the deputy prosecutor wanted us to be. She was at the outer door to the office, holding the

door open as we approached across the parking lot. She said “Oh, no – not all of you!” and closed the door quickly, going inside another, locked door within the foyer and closing it as well. We had been maybe 20 or 25 feet from the outer door when this happened. There were maybe 11 of us, only two of whom were not direct parties to the case, which has 22 defendants – many of whom are defending themselves (pro se). One of the attorneys, Larry Hildes, tried several times to negotiate a solution with Ms. Eurich by using the wall intercom in the foyer, to no mutually satisfactory result. We stayed at the prosecutor’s office for an hour, and actually had to deal with three Olympia police officers, who were called as if we were trespassing in the public foyer of the prosecutor’s office. They left without citing or arresting anyone.

In her statement to the court, Deputy Prosecutor Eurich claimed that Detective Lower had to escape her office by a back door due to our presence. But first, she privately questioned him about

the videotaped evidence and his reasons for destroying it. She also refused to allow more than the single attorney and one pro se defendant to be present at the questioning (a condition which they refused), essentially lending sanctuary to a witness so that we could not speak to him on that day unless she dictated who could be present.

Many weeks later, on October 19, we finally got our chance to depose Detective Paul Lower about his destruction of the videotape. But we had to do this in the District Courtroom Number One, and the Judge presiding over the case, Susan Dubuisson, excluded myself and several other supporters of the Oly 22 from the proceedings, on unspecified grounds. (She excluded me when Deputy Prosecutor Eurich pointed me out and named me.) I can only assume that the declaration that Deputy Prosecutor Eurich provided the court so prejudiced the Judge that she thought it prudent to decide whether I could attend an open courtroom in the United States, turning it into a branch of the Prosecutor’s office.

The trial of the Olympia 22 is set for Monday, November 13 and 14, 2006 at 9 AM in District Court. The pretrial hearing on Monday, November 6 will determine whether the case is dismissed prior to trial.

Below: The Olympia 22, six of whom are representing themselves, discuss several motions at a pretrial hearing in Thurston County District Court on October 3. (photo by Sandy Mayes)



To act as if we were free: the Oaxaca struggle explained

by Rochelle Gause

Email from Rochelle Gause in Oaxaca, October 30:

So today is day two of the federal troops' entry into Oaxaca. The people put up incredible nonviolent resistance. Folks were laying in front of bulldozers and other military machinery to prevent it from entering the city. They held them off for hours. The barricades were reinforced with many people. A friend that came into town by bus on the first day said he saw a march of 2,000 people walking in to the city by foot from their rural village to show support. They were over an hour away at the time so who knows how far they walked.

Three have been killed by the police, including a 12 year old. At least 36 have been arrested. At one point, police were entering private homes and searching for people. They have reclaimed the center square and destroyed all the tarps and such the teachers were living under. They are blockading all entrances to the center square in at least eight areas by standing shoulder to shoulder with full riot gear. They have cleared out some barricades, but many still remain. Thousands of people responded today with three marches that came together at a local church. The teachers who have been displaced by the police are setting up a new encampment by the church. Tonight they will sleep with few blankets or tarps, but tomorrow they told us reinforcements are coming.

My biggest worry right now is this: The main communication for the movement is a radio station at the university. The head of the university has taken a stand, stating that the university is autonomous and thus the federal police can't occupy the campus. This has held them off...they have surrounded it but not entered. I worry that it won't last. They cut the electricity yesterday, and the station was down, but within an hour they had a generator and were back on the air!

I cannot see the point of this federal intervention. If they truly wanted to "restore order," they would remove Ulises and his corrupt and violently repressive government, as the people are demanding. They are the ones that killed Brad Will and 15 others. Instead the federal government has come in and carried on the same human rights abuses as the state government. And you cannot stop a movement of people standing up for their rights with violence. Instead the movement has become more unified and more determined. I have no idea how this will end or how the federal government could ever proclaim that they have achieved their goals. But I do know the achievements made by the movement can not be underestimated and

that however this chapter ends, the struggle will continue.

Right before the federal police moved in, I wrote this piece for Left Turn magazine. I tried to compare the neoliberal plans for Oaxaca with those of APPO. It might be helpful background info as you hear about the current events.

A popular uprising, shaking the roots of a long held exploitive power dynamic, is occurring in Oaxaca, Mexico. Not only is it threatening the corrupt and repressive government that has held control of the region for years, the movement is also creating an alternative structure for popular governance. Beginning as a teacher's strike and evolving into a full scale popular struggle, the movement has relied on creative non-violent direct action to stop the state government from functioning and to demand the resignation of the current Governor, Ulises Ruiz Ortiz. The impact of the struggle is reaching beyond the state of Oaxaca, adding strength to movements rooted in the poorest classes throughout Mexico.

Ripe for revolt

Extreme inequality combined with a history of exploitation and resistance has made the Oaxaca community ripe for revolt. A system of popular education, which provided widespread understanding of the roots of the situation, has helped lay the groundwork for today's mobilization. But what takes a movement over that edge, where the status quo of society is interrupted, and those involved are willing to sacrifice everything for change?

Seventy percent of the 3.5 million people who live in the state of Oaxaca are indigenous. Over half live in poverty; 35% do not have piped water in their homes. In 46% of the households, there is at least one person who has had to migrate to the United States. Government reforms have destroyed the economy in their community through the implementation of free trade agreements and other neo-liberal policies. These policies have removed subsidies for basic needs and have forced Mexican farmers to lower their prices to compete with US farm exports. Publicly owned enterprises have been privatized and sold to foreign investors, destroying unions and job opportunities.

The right-wing Institutional Revolution-

ary Party (PRI) has held control of Oaxaca for the past 80 years. The current governor, Ulises Ruiz Ortiz, a carbon copy of the most corrupt PRI leadership, has worked hard to implement these neo-liberal projects, lining his own pockets while repressing all public opinion against the party.

Unable to be elected democratically, Ulises was forced to steal his position through vote buying, ballot box tampering and computer fraud. On 1 December 2004, Ulises' first day as Governor, 40 armed men occupied the offices of *Noticias*, the state's largest daily newspaper, which had documented the election fraud. After six months in office Ulises has already received warnings from eight international and national human rights organizations. The exact numbers are hard to determine, but it is estimated that 38 people have been killed and 130 have been imprisoned for political reasons since he came to power.

The murder and imprisonment of social leaders in Oaxaca is necessary for the implementation of Plan Puebla Pananma (PPP), a neo-liberal development project strongly supported by the United States. The PPP states as one of its main goals to improve the conditions of the people of the region. In reality, it will steal land from indigenous people for infrastructure projects and commodify their culture for the tourist industry. One of the plans with huge implications for Oaxaca is the creation of a superhighway at Mexico's skinniest point, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, in order to move resources more readily across the land from the Atlantic to the Pacific and into the hands of multinational corporations. This transportation corridor will be surrounded by maquiladoras, sweatshops free of labor and environmental laws. According to Florentino López Martínez, a member of the movement, "For all of these objectives, the government of Oaxaca is key, so that these projects can be realized."

Teacher's union strike

For the past 26 years, Section 22 of the National Union of Education Workers has held an annual statewide strike. The Mexican constitution demands that all children have the same access to education, and yet today in Oaxaca the average person spends only 5.6 years in school, two years less than the national average. Rural schools lack basic infrastructure. Children often come to school hungry and barefoot and have to work without desks, books and pencils.

Section 22 has had a strong and radical history standing up to the privatization of education and has become a powerful force

in the statewide struggle for social justice. The teachers themselves are often community leaders. In the union's history, over one hundred teachers have been killed standing up for much needed change in Oaxaca. The demands for this year's strike include raises, basic supplies, and breakfast for the students. Each year the teachers camp out in the main square of Oaxaca city until an adequate compromise is reached.

This year, rather than continuing negotiations, the government chose repression as a means to end the strike. At 4:30 AM on June 14, while 40,000 teachers and their families were sleeping, thousands of police raided the encampment, burned the teachers' belongings, injured 100 people and fired tear gas into the crowd from police helicopters. During the attack the teachers resisted with sticks and rocks, reclaiming the square later the same day.

Formation of the Popular Assembly

Two days later, outraged at the repression, 400,000 people participated in a massive march to show support for the teachers and to call for the resignation of Governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz. A new entity, the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca (APPO), was formed from the 350 social organizations that mobilized alongside the teachers' strike, and soon to include Section 22 itself. "APPO does not set out to impose any decisions," Florentino explains. "What we want is to integrate all the people so that together we can organize and govern the state."

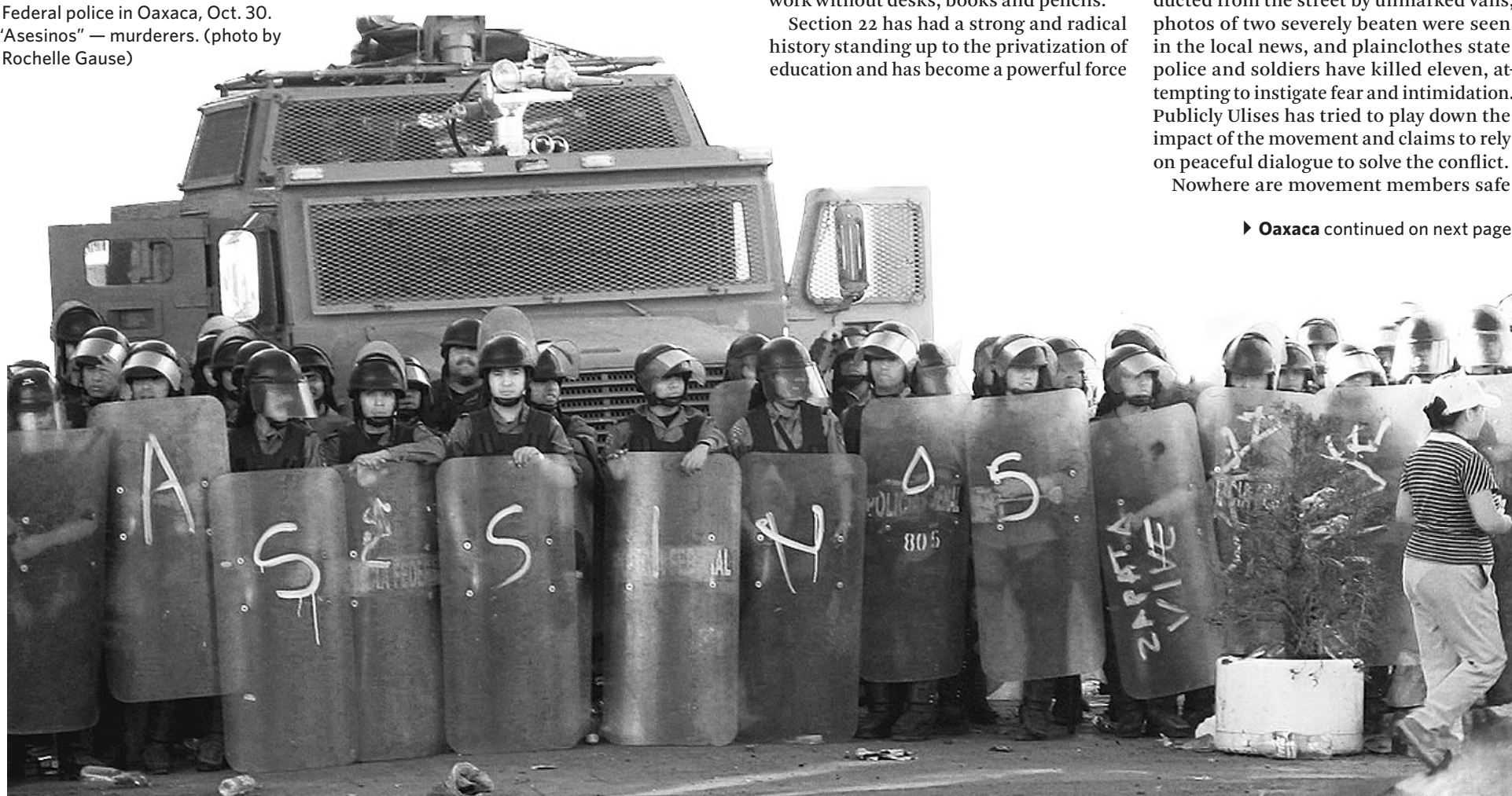
The primary strategy to achieve the resignation of Ulises Ruiz Ortiz has been to create a state of ungovernability through nonviolent direct action. To stop the current state government from functioning, encampments of hundreds of teachers and supporters have been established outside government buildings, preventing employees from entering. Without any other choice, the state government has attempted to meet outside the city in fancy hotels, but the movement has been quick to organize and prevent such gatherings. Additionally, government vehicles have been "reclaimed" by the movement, statewide strikes have been orchestrated, banks have been shut down, and major highways have been blockaded. Radio and TV stations have been taken over to provide means of communication and coordination for the movement.

Repression continues

Resorting to the usual tactics, Ulises' government issued arrest warrants for at least 80 movement "leaders," including members of the teachers' union. Five have been abducted from the street by unmarked vans, photos of two severely beaten were seen in the local news, and plainclothes state police and soldiers have killed eleven, attempting to instigate fear and intimidation. Publicly Ulises has tried to play down the impact of the movement and claims to rely on peaceful dialogue to solve the conflict.

Nowhere are movement members safe

► Oaxaca continued on next page



Federal police in Oaxaca, Oct. 30. "Asesinos" — murderers. (photo by Rochelle Gause)

► **Oaxaca** continued from previous page

from the threat of armed attack. People have been killed while simply handing out coffee at late night barricades, while participating in a march, or while leaving a neighborhood APPO meeting. On October 27, Brad Will, a New York City Indymedia journalist was killed while filming a barricade attack by plainclothes police.

Death threats are not uncommon. A website called “Oaxaca en Paz” shows the faces of APPO members with their names and home addresses, encouraging people to “find and detain them.” Those already killed were marked with a large red X across their faces. Remarkably, through all of this the movement remains strong and dedicated to not taking up arms.

Federal government intervention
The threat of large-scale federal repression has been looming throughout the length of this struggle. As the media repeats President Fox’s reassurances that the federal government will not resort to violence, thousands of soldiers and police have been relocated to the region. Attempts have been made to create justifications and to garner support for federal intervention. Men claiming to be guerilla resistance fighters (in their oddly shiny new boots and uniforms) were reported to be gathering in the northern mountain villages. As expected the federal government has found support from the upper classes for intervention, although some members of the business community have made a stand against such actions. “We, the business community, have been asked to support the entrance of government forces with the pretext of re-establishing law and order,” explained Luis Hogarte Chea. However he cannot support federal action, “knowing full well that these laws have been violated and broken on many more occasions and in ways much more grave, by the government itself.”

Recognizing Ulises as an illegitimate power, APPO has refused to negotiate with the state government since the June 14. Federal government negotiations have failed repeatedly as government officials have offered only minor compromises, refusing to address the demand that Ulises resign. The Mexican senate, sticking to party lines, also refused to remove him from power, just after 5,000 teachers walked the entire 280 miles from Oaxaca City to Mexico City with this demand.

Persistence and alternatives
Whether or not Ulises leaves office and whether or not this phase of the struggle results in violent federal intervention, the achievements made for the people of Oaxaca by Section 22 and APPO cannot be underestimated. APPO has moved full speed ahead on creating a new structure of governance, a means for millions of new voices to be heard. “It is necessary to have a government that is more inclusive, plural, just, respectful of constitutional guarantees and human rights, more transparent, with more input and participation from the citizens, respectful of culture, languages, traditions and symbols of identity,” states the summary from one of their initial forums.

Multiple dialogues and forums have been held throughout the struggle to increase national and international solidarity with the people of Oaxaca and to continue to formalize APPO’s plans to create a Constituent Assembly. This assembly will be made up of democratically elected delegates from communities, neighborhoods and workplaces throughout the state of Oaxaca. The indigenous people of the region have been long familiar with this type of consensus based organizational structure; many municipalities are still run by the general assemblies under the traditional native customs of “usos y costumbres.” According to resolutions from the first state assembly, “The

character of APPO should be broad, popular, inclusive, democratic, anti-imperialist, anti-fascist and anti-capitalist.”

Although APPO’s program of struggle is still in its initial stages of development, insight can be gained on the change of direction they have in mind for Oaxaca’s future. The four main components of APPO’s current program are “the defense of national sovereignty,” “a new model of economic

development,” “popular democracy,” and “social justice.” The recognition of self determination is stressed, as well as the elimination of the “political, economic, and military subordination of Mexico to the US empire and to the international financial centers.” The program also calls for the cancellation and rejection of all future “pacts of subordination,” such as the PPP and free trade treaties. Instead, APPO calls for community based economics and an equitable distribution of wealth for all, as well as the nationalization of natural resources, energy, monopoly businesses and banking institutions. Their alternative vision also includes redistribution of land from wealthy landholders to poor farmers, the move toward food sufficiency and organic agriculture, and the development of worker-created small businesses in the rural communities.

To act as if free
Clearly the time has come for change in Mexico, and Oaxaca is serving as an incredible model of a people demanding change and creating a new structure of popular governance in the face of repression. The depth of need for this sort of grassroots alternative can be seen in the recent creation of assemblies modeled after APPO in 11 of the 33 states in Mexico. Four have been created in the United States—in New York, California, Illinois, and Texas.

The globalization of our economic systems is nothing new; the structures of exploitation and of control are well established. Struggles, like the one in Oaxaca, are eroding these relationships, attempting to return power to the masses and prioritizing the needs of the community and human rights, rather than profit margins.

And these struggles too are beginning to globalize. Mass migration and means of global communication, both created by global capitalism, are now being used to increase cross-border solidarity. No wall between the US and Mexico can separate the millions marching for US immigrant rights from the people struggling here in Mexico.

The scope of change required may seem unattainable and utopian in the current political climate, but so many lessons can be gained from the people in Oaxaca—from the teachers who have slept on the street since May, from the neighbors who created and maintained over a thousand nightly barricades to protect them, and from the sea of fists held high as yet another casket passes through the center square. As Howard Zinn eloquently stated, “After recognizing we are bound, to act as if we were free, leaps in social evolution have come this way.”

Rochelle Gause is an Olympia activist who has been in Oaxaca since the uprising began in June, and has served as a delegate with the Olympia–Rafah Sister City Project.

Photos from Oaxaca, from top to bottom:
Federal police enter Oaxaca, Oct. 29; APPO march, Oct. 30 (“Dignity to our people”); APPO march, Nov. 1, with marchers telling the police, “Why are you defending a governor who is murdering the people? You are the people!”; Oct. 29, “Police, you are the people, too!” (all photos by Rochelle Gause. More photos available at www.flickr.com/photos/72025498@N00)



► **Poverty** continued from page 1

Get involved

In addition to voting with your dollars by shopping downtown and contacting your city councilmembers, come to a forum being hosted by the Olympia Movement for Justice and Peace on December 6th. Watch for internet postings and flyers for further details this November.

For more information on this topic, view these past writings on the subject:

whatthistownneeds.blogspot.com/2006/09/pat-tassonis-guide-to-downtown-olympia_27.html

www.olywip.org/old_site/www.olywa.net/wip/Feb2002/Class_Glass.html

www.olywip.org/wip/wip/authors/pat.tassoni

Pat Tassoni has been in Olympia for over 30 years, which is longer than most of the transients we call the Olympia City Council, who came in the 80s. He has lived and worked in historical buildings downtown for the past 20 years and been fighting city policies that target the poor for nearly 15 years now.

Brief chronology of downtown:
1950: Downtown businesses want Sylvester Park turned into parking lot
1980: City approves Capital Mall; all department stores leave downtown
1985: Olympia police create walking patrol downtown
1986: Criminalization of skateboarding downtown
1987: Outlawing of teen dance clubs downtown
1990: Criminalization of loud car stereos
1990: Olympia Downtown Business Association officially forms
1991: Outlawing of cruising downtown
1993: Criminalization of "aggressive panhandling"
1994/5: Attempted stop of transitional housing for homeless (Fleetwood)
1995: Proposed criminalization of car camping
1995: Proposed outlawing of fortified wine downtown
1996: Outlawing of Olympia AIDS Prevention Project needle exchange
1996/7: Attempted banning of sitting on the sidewalk downtown
1999/2000: Criminalization of graffiti
2001/2002: Proposed criminalization of camping
Proposed criminalization of car camping
Proposed outlawing of fortified wine downtown
Attempted establishment of panhandling zone
2005 - Downtown designated 'Business District,' with over 60 businesses objecting, and gives extra funding to ODA

Homeless Outreach: Supplies needed

For many of us, winter is a time of fellowship. It's a time to recognize major holidays, remember family, celebrate the new year and start new beginnings. However for others, winter can be a time of hardship and isolation. Each Winter, Olympia's homeless and street populations struggle to meet their basic needs for food, sobriety, warmth, and community. For some, getting through winter is literally a matter of life or death.

The **Emma Goldman Youth and Homeless Outreach Project** (EGYHOP), a Project of Done & Done, has dedicated itself to relieving these burdens on Olympia's most downtrodden by providing direct resources to populations in need. We serve all types of people, and are sometimes the only option left for those who have been denied access to other services based on mental health issues, addictions, or criminality.

Please help us fight poverty this winter by giving generously to the Emma Goldman Youth and Homeless Outreach Project. We always appreciate monetary donations, but our true value is in what we can immediately offer to others. **Blankets, sleeping bags, backpacks, camping gear, gloves, tarps, hygiene supplies and warm clothing—especially socks**, are the most important contributions.

Donations can be dropped off at the Bike & Bike space on Fourth Avenue and Franklin Street in Olympia. A donation bin is located at the Franklin Street side door of the new Dumpster Values building. Monetary donations can be made by sending a check to "Done and Done," PO Box 6382, Olympia, WA 98507-6382. Call (360) 570-0608 for more information. egyhop is a project of the Done and Done 501(c)3 non-profit. Non-profit id #20-3433042



Bus shelter replaced

Now can we have our bench back?

After contacting *Works In Progress* regarding Chris Allert's article in last month's issue, reporter Rachel Young wrote a fine piece for the *Olympian* (10/18/2006) about the removal, and by that time, the replacement of the bus shelter in front of DeGarmo's Compounding Pharmacy.

When the bus shelter went missing in late September, Allert called Intercity Transit and was told that owner Richard DeGarmo had requested its removal due to the amount of litter it seemed to generate. DeGarmo was out of town at the time, and

could not comment for the *WIP* article, which urged readers to call both Intercity Transit and DeGarmo's to ask for the high-traffic bus shelter to be returned. It wasn't long thereafter that the shelter reappeared.

When questioned by Young, DeGarmo told her that he "contacted Intercity Transit because he was tired of all of the trash around his pharmacy, which he attributed to the bus stop. He did not request that the shelter be removed, he said. He asked that something be done about the trash

and was surprised when the shelter at Harrison Avenue and Division Street was taken out a couple of weeks ago. 'I have no problem with the shelter, I have a problem with trash.'

The *Olympian* article goes on to say that "DeGarmo agreed to have the shelter put back as long as Intercity Transit agrees to be more diligent in keeping the area litter free, said Dennis Bloom, planning manager for Intercity Transit. The agency now has an employee visit the site daily to pick up trash."

Mason County: a chance to become a leader

by Janet Jordan

Voters in Mason County have a unique opportunity to elect a PUD commissioner who will set the district up to produce its own power from renewable sources spread across the county. Steve Garrison can make it happen.

The PUD (Public Utilities District) is where the power choices are made for that community. When a county selects a clean, renewable energy source such as wind or solar power, it's one more step back from the brink of global climate change. In Mason County, that step can be taken.

Mason County will have the answers to many questions that typically make a local government hesitate to switch to cleaner energy. Such a move will mean investing in a new infrastructure when the old infrastructure, with all its faults, is ready to supply all our needs. Will the new energy always be available? What if the wind drops, if clouds cover the sun? Is the technology mature, or should we wait?

Steve has worked in the field of solar energy for many years, and knows the answers to these and other questions. Yes, the technology is available right now. With energy producing units spread out over the county ("distributed") and feeding into a network, there will be enough energy, and Steve knows how it can be stored. His enthusiasm for bio-fuels is more qualified, since energy inputs to these fuels vary, and can be greater than the outputs. He'll add bio to the mix if and when it makes sense. (Go to his website, VoteGarrison.us, for more info.)

With the enthusiasm of an idealist, Steve talks about the effects on the economy of the newer, cleaner fuels. With distributed energy sources, every homeowner can be a producer. When their

energy feeds into the power grid, these producers earn money, and the money the county spends on energy stays home. Plus, of course, costs and pollution resulting from production are minimized.

Steve also has plans for the use of fiber optics cable, which will go in alongside the energy cables which will be buried underground (for much lower maintenance bills). They will be available to every household, giving them high-speed Internet access and making work at home a possibility—very important in a rural area.

The race is non-partisan, but it is interesting that Steve has chosen to be a member

of the Green Party, the party of uncompromising principles. This win on a local level will show that principles are good politics too.

Mason County is lucky to have this forward-thinking and knowledgeable worker standing ready for the PUD position. I have no doubt at all that he will be elected, and once in office, will make the changes he envisions.

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Perception limits us. Imagination liberates us. —Jed Whittaker

— WRITE IN —

Jed Whittaker for Congress

VALUES

1 The difference between right and wrong.
Jed wants to end the war in Iraq because killing people is wrong. Congressman Brian Baird voted against the war in Iraq, but continues to vote to fund it. When something is wrong, it continues to be wrong. When parents teach their children the difference between right and wrong, they try to be consistent. What does Congressman Brian Baird think?

Congressman Brian Baird is the type of politician that waits to see which way the wind is blowing before he acts. Congressman Baird is a fence- sitter, and will wait to see which way the majority of the people are going, then he will adopt a position that makes it appear that he is leading the crowd. The 64 per cent of the people of Washington want an immediate withdrawal within six months from the war in Iraq, according to a poll done by the Republican firm Strategic Vision. In the Olympian published September 24th, Congressman Baird had this to say about a withdrawal from Iraq: No. "I fear there could be broad scale civil war, and some people talk about tens of thousands of civilian deaths." Three weeks later, here is what Congressman Baird told the Vancouver newspaper the Columbian in an article published October 18th: " I personally believe that immediately after the U.S. election, the Iraqi government should ask us to withdraw. It would give them credibility with their own constituents. It would also help us say, 'The elected government is asking us to withdraw.'"

This inconsistency of Congressman Baird is astounding. Over 655,000 Iraqi men women and children are dead as a result of this illegal and immoral war. Congressman Baird has blood on his hands, and clearly changes his position with respect to the Iraq War on almost a weekly basis.

The purpose of my candidacy as an independent write in candidate is to help end the war by helping Congressman Baird see which way the wind is blowing, to help him get in front of 64 percent of Washingtonians who favor an immediate withdrawal from Iraq.

Congressman Baird is assured re-election with about 70% of the vote.

I ask for your help to end the war in Iraq. Vote for me to let Congressman Baird know which way the wind is blowing. As Gandhi said, "Be the change you want to see." Meaning everyone can do something for peace in the world. Here is something you can do besides voting for me : email your friends, tell them you are writing in Jed Whittaker to help end the war in Iraq. Ask them to write in Jed Whittaker as well. Ask them to forward your email to their friends, asking them to forward on the original email, etc. A chain email if you will, to end the war in Iraq, by doing something very simple: voting for a candidate who wants to end the war in Iraq. Peace,

Jed Whittaker October 24, 2006

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Biography

- Alaska resident 40 years
- Washington resident 4 years
- Graduate of Evergreen State College
- Proud member of the Laborer's Union Local 252
- Commercial fisherman
- Small business owner
- President of EARTH, a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation 1990-93
- Political Activist
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The worst of intentions

ISRAEL SHOULD BE JUDGED BY ITS ACTIONS, NOT BY OUR FAITH

by Jonathan Cook

A mistake too often made by those examining Israel's behavior in the Occupied Territories—or when analyzing its treatment of Arabs in general, or interpreting its view of Iran—is to assume that Israel is acting in good faith. Even its most trenchant critics can fall into this trap.

Such a reluctance to attribute bad faith was demonstrated in September by Israel's foremost human rights group, B'Tselem, when it published a report into the bombing by the Israeli air force of Gaza's power plant in late June. The horrifying consequences of this act of collective punishment—a war crime, as B'Tselem rightly notes—are clearly laid out in the report.

The group warns that electricity is available to most of Gaza's 1.4 million inhabitants for a few hours a day, and running water for a similar period. The sewage system has all but collapsed, with the resulting risk of the spread of dangerous infectious disease.

In their daily lives, Gazans can no longer rely on the basic features of modern existence. Their fridges are as good as useless, threatening outbreaks of food poisoning. The elderly and infirm living in apartments can no longer leave their homes because elevators don't work, or are unpredictable. Hospitals and doctors' clinics struggle to offer essential medical services. Small businesses, most of which rely on the power and water supplies, from food shops and laundry services to factories and workshops, are being forced to close.

Rapidly approaching, says B'Tselem, is the moment when Gaza's economy—already under an internationally backed siege to penalise the Palestinians for democratically electing a Hamas government—will simply expire under the strain.

Unfortunately, however, B'Tselem loses the plot when it comes to explaining why Israel would choose to inflict such terrible punishment on the people of Gaza. Apparently, it was out of a thirst for revenge: the group's report is even entitled "Act of Vengeance." Israel, it seems, wanted revenge for the capture a few days earlier of an Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, from a border tank position used to fire artillery into Gaza.

The problem with the "revenge" theory is that, however much a rebuke it is, it presupposes a degree of good faith on the part of the vengeance-seeker. You steal my toy in the playground, and I lash out and hit you. I have acted badly—even disproportionately, to use a vogue word B'Tselem also adopts—but no one would deny that my emotions were honest. There was no subterfuge or deception in my anger. I incur blame only because I failed to control my impulses. There is even the implication that, though my action was unwarranted, my fury was justified.

But why should we think Israel is acting in good faith, even if in bad temper, in destroying Gaza's power station? Why should we assume it was a hot-headed over-reaction rather than a coldly calculated deed?

In other words, why believe Israel is simply lashing out when it commits a war crime rather than committing it after careful advance planning? Is it not possible that such war crimes, rather than being spontaneous and random, are actually all pushing in the same direction?

More especially, why should we give Israel the benefit of the doubt when its war crimes contribute, as the bombing of the power station in Gaza surely does, to easily deciphered objectives? Why not think of the bombing instead as one installment in a long-running and slowly unfolding plan?

The occupation of Gaza did not begin this year, after Hamas was elected, nor did it end with the disengagement a year ago. The occupation is four decades old and still going strong in both the West Bank and Gaza. In that time Israel has followed a consistent policy of subjugating the Palestinian population, imprisoning it inside ever-shrinking ghettos, sealing it off

from contact with the outside world, and destroying its chances of ever developing an independent economy.

Since the outbreak six years ago of the second intifada—the Palestinians' uprising against the occupation—Israel has tightened its system of controls. It has sought to do so through two parallel, reinforcing approaches.

First, it has imposed forms of collective punishment to weaken Palestinian resolve to resist the occupation, and encourage

Why not consider for a moment that Israel's stated view of Hamas may be a self-serving charade, that the Israeli government has invested its energies in discrediting Hamas, and before it secular Palestinian leaders, because it has no interest in peace and never has?

factionalism and civil war. Second, it has "domesticated" suffering inside the ghettos, ensuring each Palestinian finds himself isolated from his neighbors, his concerns reduced to the domestic level: how to receive a house permit, or get past the wall to school or university, or visit a relative illegally imprisoned in Israel, or stop yet more family land from being stolen, or reach his olive groves.

The goals of both sets of policies, however, are the same: the erosion of Palestinian society's cohesiveness, the disruption of efforts at solidarity and resistance, and ultimately the slow drift of Palestinians away from vulnerable rural areas into the relative safety of urban centers—and eventually, as the pressure continues to mount, on into neighboring Arab states, such as Jordan and Egypt.

Seen in this light, the bombing of the Gaza power station fits neatly into Israel's long-standing plans for the Palestinians. Vengeance has nothing to do with it.

Another recent, more predictable, example was an email exchange published on the *Media Lens* forum website involving the BBC's Middle East editor, Jeremy Bowen. Bowen was questioned about why the BBC had failed to report on an important peace initiative begun this summer jointly by a small group of Israeli rabbis and Hamas politicians. A public meeting where the two sides would have unveiled their initiative was foiled when Israel's Shin Bet secret service, presumably with the approval of the Israeli government, blocked the Hamas MPs [members of parliament] from entering Jerusalem.

Bowen, though implicitly critical of Israel's behavior, believes the initiative was of only marginal significance. He doubts that the Shin Bet or the government were overly worried by the meeting—in his words, it was seen as no more than a "minor irritant"—because the Israeli peace camp has shown a great reluctance to get involved with the Palestinians since the outbreak of the intifada in 2000. The Israeli government would not want Hamas looking "more respectable," he admits, but adds that that is because "they believe that it is a terrorist organization out to kill Jews and to destroy their country."

In short, the Israeli government cracked down on the initiative because they believed Hamas was not a genuine partner for peace. Again, at least apparently in Bowen's view, Israel was acting in good faith: when it warns that it cannot talk with Hamas because it is a terrorist organization, it means what it says.

But what if, for a second, we abandon the assumption of good faith?

Hamas comprises a militant wing, a political wing and a network of welfare charities. Israel chooses to characterize all these activities as terrorist in nature, refusing to discriminate between the group's different wings. It denies that Hamas could have multiple identities in the same way the Irish Republican Army, which included a political wing called Sinn Fein, clearly did.

Some of Israel's recent actions might fit with such a simplistic view of Hamas. Israel tried to prevent Hamas from standing

in the Palestinian elections, only backing down after the Americans insisted on the group's participation. Israel now appears to be destroying the Palestinians' governing institutions, claiming that once in Hamas' hands they will be used to promote terror.

The Israeli government, it could be argued, acts in these ways because it is genuinely persuaded that even the political wing of Hamas is cover for terrorist activity.

But most other measures suggest that in reality Israel has a different agenda. Since

the Palestinian elections six months ago, Israel's policies towards Hamas have succeeded in achieving one end: the weakening of the group's moderates, especially the newly elected politicians, and the strengthening of the militants. In the debate inside Hamas about whether to move towards politics, diplomacy and dialogue, or concentrate on military resistance, we can guess which side is currently winning.

The moderates not the militants have been damaged by the isolation of the elected Hamas government, imposed by the international community at Israel's instigation. The moderates not the militants have been weakened by Israel rounding up and imprisoning the group's MPs. The moderates not the militants have been harmed by the failure, encouraged by Israel, of Fatah and Hamas politicians to create a national unity government. And the approach of the moderates not the militants has been discredited by Israel's success in blocking the summer peace initiative between Hamas MPs and the rabbis.

In other words, Israeli policies are encouraging the extremist and militant elements inside Hamas rather than the political and moderate ones. So why not assume that is their aim?

Why not assume that rather than wanting a dialogue, a real peace process and an eventual agreement with the Palestinians that might lead to Palestinian statehood, Israel wants an excuse to carry on with its four-decade occupation—even if it has to reinvent it through sleights of hand like the disengagement and convergence plans?

Why not assume that Israel blocked the meeting between the rabbis and the Hamas MPs because it fears that such a dialogue might suggest to Israeli voters and the world that there are strong voices in Hamas prepared to consider an agreement with Israel, and that given a chance their strength and influence might grow?

Why not assume that the Israeli government wanted to disrupt the contacts between Hamas and the rabbis for exactly the same reasons that it has repeatedly used violence to break up joint demonstrations in Palestinian villages like Bil'in staged by Israeli and Palestinian peace activists opposed to the wall that is annexing Palestinian farm land to Israel?

And why, unlike Bowen, not take serious opinion polls like the one published this week that show 67% of Israelis support negotiations with a Palestinian national unity government (that is, one including Hamas), and that 56% favor talks with a Palestinian government whoever is leading it? Could it

be that faced with these kinds of statistics Israel's leaders are terrified that, if Hamas were given the chance to engage in a peace process, Israeli voters might start putting more pressure on their own government to make meaningful concessions?

In other words, why not consider for a moment that Israel's stated view of Hamas may be a self-serving charade, that the Israeli government has invested its energies in discrediting Hamas, and before it secular Palestinian leaders, because it has no interest in peace and never has? Its goal is the maintenance of the occupation on the best terms it can find for itself.

On much the same grounds, we should treat equally skeptically another recent Israeli policy: the refusal by the Israeli Interior Ministry to renew the tourist visas of Palestinians with foreign passports, thereby forcing them to leave their homes and families inside the occupied territories. Many of these Palestinians, who were originally stripped by Israel of their residency rights in violation of international law, often when they left to work or study abroad, have been living on renewable three-month visas for years, even decades.

Amazingly, this compounding of the original violation of these Palestinian families' rights has received almost no media coverage and so far provoked not a peep of outrage from the big international human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

I can hazard a guess why. Unusually, Israel has made no serious attempt to justify this measure. Furthermore, unlike the two examples cited above, it is difficult to put forward even a superficially plausible reason why Israel needs to pursue this policy, except for the obvious motive: that Israel believes it has found another bureaucratic wheeze to deny a few more thousand Palestinians their birthright. It is another small measure designed to ethnically cleanse these Palestinians from what might have been their state, were Israel interested in peace.

Unlike the other two examples, it is impossible to assume any good faith on Israel's part in this story: the measure has no security value, not even of the improbable variety, nor can it be sold as an over-reaction, vengeance, to a provocation by the group affected.

Palestinians with foreign passports are among the richest, best educated and possibly among the most willing to engage in dialogue with Israel. Many have large business investments in the occupied territories they wish to protect from further military confrontation, and most speak fluently the language of the international community—English. In other words, they might have been a bridgehead to a peace process were Israel genuinely interested in one.

But as we have seen, Israel isn't. If only our media and human rights organizations could bring themselves to admit as much. But because they can't, the transparently bad faith underpinning of Israel's administrative attempt at ethnic cleansing may be allowed to pass without any censure at all.

Printed with permission. Jonathan Cook is a writer and journalist based in Nazareth, Israel. He is the author of Blood and Religion: The Unmasking of the Jewish and Democratic State published by Pluto Press, and available in the United States from the University of Michigan Press. His website is www.jkcook.net





Melissa Roberts takes on the Port of Olympia, May 29, 2006. (photo by Sandy Mayes)

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Bring on the US Navy, Army, FBI, or the Port of Olympia firehoses! Whatever kind of Bosses you got...**Melissa Roberts** is ready for action!

You got a soup kitchen/homeless shelter in need of cash? Or maybe a grassroots lefty newspaper ? How about a gaggle of 22 defendants putting the War in Iraq on trial? She'll whip up a Work-a-Day or Pizza Party fundraiser in no time. If that lefty newspaper or any other counterculture publication requires the talents of a top-notch layout artist...guess what? She's your gal. Feeling oppressed in your place of employment and need some iww-style organizing tips? Call Melissa.

Oh, wait ... sorry. Too late. She's leaving! Now in service of that grandest of causes: life, liberty and the pursuit of true bliss, one of Olympia's most natural of wonders, is relocating to Denmark. Hard as it may be for most of us to comprehend, since—

as one friend and comrade tried to point out—"They don't even have a Movement in Denmark!"... it's a done deal. She's got the tickets; her bags are packed.

She leaves behind a trail of tangible gifts to the community. Whether it be the ORS program guide or the *Co-op News* or even this *very* newspaper, Melissa's the one who for years has made our reading material pleasing to the eye. From Unity in the Community to the Support Lt. Watada campaign, her graphic artistry is everywhere...in our homes, in shop windows, and on bumper stickers, buttons, and T-shirts.

And more than anything, whatever the project or campaign, she helped make it both joyful and meaningful for the people around her.

Thanks Melissa, for everything you've given this community. We love you...we'll miss you...and we wish you the very, very best.

Know your farmer, know your food

by Michael Abelman

Not long ago lettuce came only in heads and spinach in bunches. For a salad, someone else might do the growing, but you still did the trimming and washing. You had some control—and responsibility—over the process. Now salad comes prewashed and bagged. You just pour it on a plate, dress it, put it in your mouth and chew.

This convenience adds risk. You give one more job over to someone somewhere else, trusting that they are concerned as much about product quality and your health as about the bottom line on the quarterly report.

But the business of food is now big business, and it might be making us sick. Witness the spinach tainted with E. coli bacteria that is blamed for more than 180 people infected in 26 states and Ontario, Canada, including one death.

The first mixed salad greens and loose spinach were from small, local growers who hand-cut the young greens and rushed them to market, organ-transplant style. Now we have a multimillion-dollar salad industry that consolidates raw ingredients from many big producers and has little control over growing methods. Washing salad ingredients on this scale requires facilities more like municipal swimming pools or public bathhouses than where our food should come from. And if you remember sixth-grade biology, you know that stuffing fresh, green leaves into sealed plastic bags is a great way to breed bacteria.

The spinach scare has prompted cries for better regulation and inspection. But the drama over one microorganism distracts us from something much bigger: a vast industrial food system built on cheap, empty calories—from government-subsidized corn, for example—that feed epidemic levels of obesity and diabetes. Sometimes it seems to be a system more interested in finding ways to pump more high-fructose corn syrup into kids' breakfast cereals than in providing fresh, whole foods to nourish their growing bodies.

The day after the spinach story broke, I was selling at the local farm market. My tables were loaded with the abundance

of fall: strawberries and melons, French beans, squashes, onions, heirloom tomatoes, sweet peppers, lettuce, chard and spinach. The spinach drew the most attention. Deep green leaves, each the size of small dinner platters, filled five bins. By mid-morning they were empty. All buyers had heard about the tainted spinach, but none hesitated to fill their bags.

I didn't have to explain why my spinach was different from that recalled from supermarkets. Neither did other market gardeners across the continent. We are part of a broad movement reclaiming food from faceless, long-distance industrial providers. We're demanding not only that it be safe, but that it taste good—and that it be grown in a way that honors the land and those doing the work. And while it's true that we could slip up and make someone sick, the results of any carelessness would be smaller, more local.

Food safety doesn't hinge on monitoring tiny bacteria. It depends on the most fundamental aspect of a healthy food system: relationships—biological, personal, ecological and local. Those relationships are on a scale small and, so, familiar. My local customers don't need federal inspections, more regulations, sophisticated sampling and analysis, or even an organic label. They know me, they know my farm, they know the care and attention I place in every step.

If we are truly concerned about food safety, we need to know the folks who grow our food, know that they are paid a decent wage, know that the land they farm is well cared for and protected, and know that the food they grow has not been irradiated or genetically engineered or exposed to pesticides. It is this knowing that will truly nourish us and keep us well.

Michael Ableman farms with his wife and two sons on an island in British Columbia. His latest book is Fields of Plenty. This comment was written for the Prairie Writers Circle, a project of the Land Institute, Salina, Kansas.



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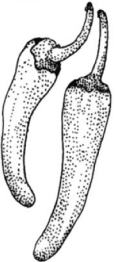
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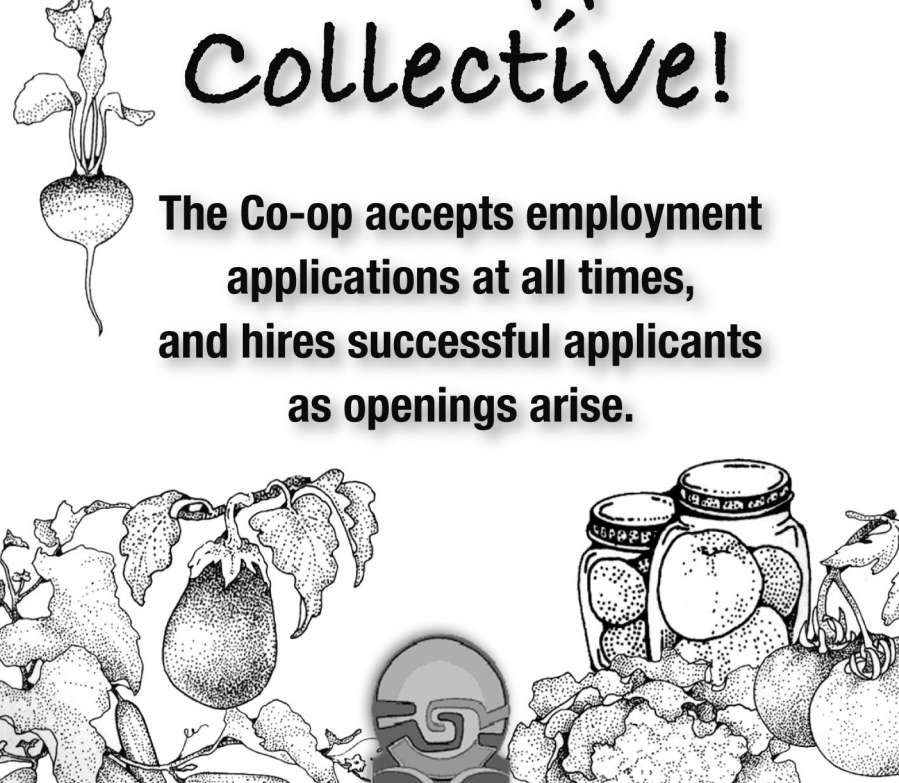




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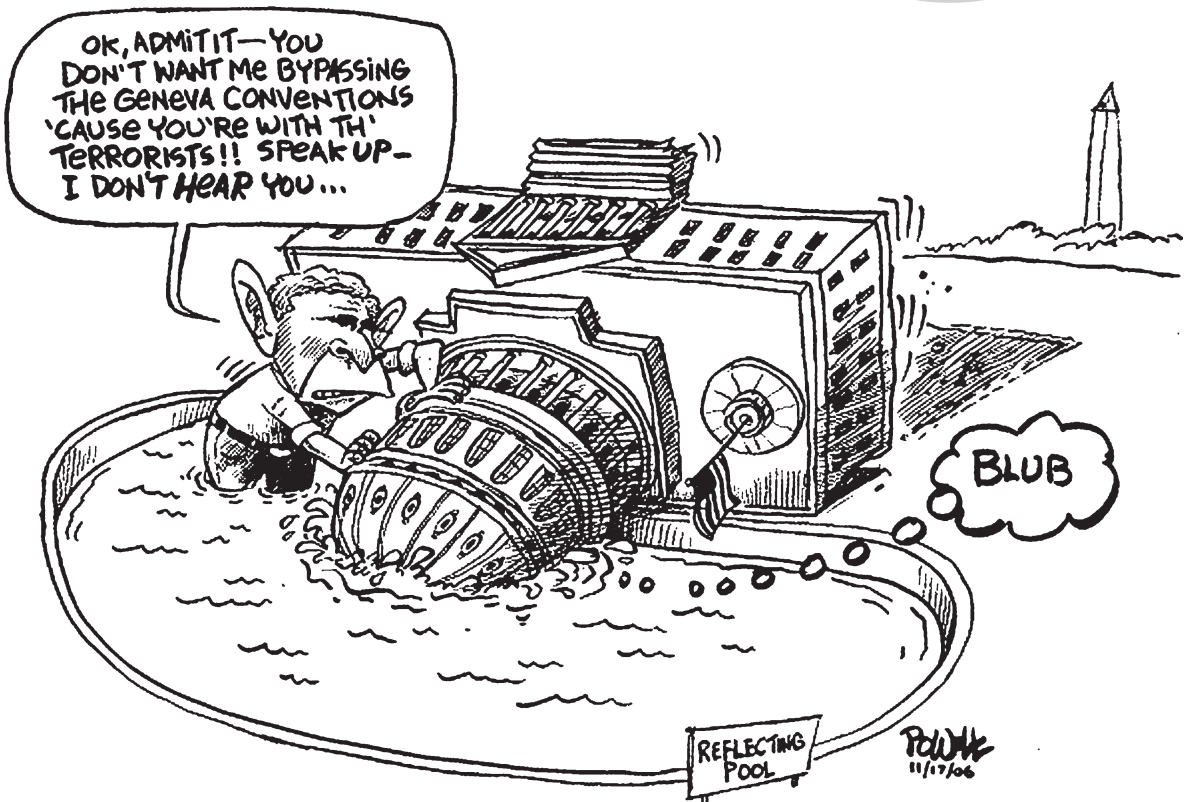
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The Olympia 22 wins a historic precedent
in Thurston County District Court

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